

Martha Douglas

(10 Oct 1824 - 22 Jan 1853)

Douglas. At the residence of her husband in this city on the 19th instant at 4 o'clock p.m. after a few days illness, Martha, wife of the Hon. Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois and only surviving child of the late Col. Martin of North Carolina. The funeral will take place from her late residence on Saturday next at 12 o'clock p.m. The friends of the family are invited to attend.

The National Intelligencer, January 24, 1853, p. 3

Obituary

The past week has taken away from us one of the best and purest of God's creation. Mrs. Martha Martin Douglas has entered the "ponderous and marble jaws" of the tomb. Insatiate Death demanded the sacrifice, and we are left to mourn over the early fate of a loved one, whose example was a shining light to those who survive her.

It was my happiness to know this estimable lady, at her home in Chicago, and deeply does her demise fall upon the heart whose tears almost obliterate the lines endeavored to be traced upon the cold, passionless paper.

I cannot believe she is no more. I never bury my dead. If those who are dear to me while living must pass away from our outward senses, there is a spirit-strain ever ringing in my mental hearing that they still live. My other sight beholds them away beyond the empyrean, white-robed angels of light.

Mrs. Douglas was emphatically what one of her sex, exalted in talent and worth, entitled a characterless woman; that is, she possessed none of those marked features of character which attract the public gaze. She was content with being a loving wife and fond mother. Her happiness was concentrated in home and its endearments, and such virtues as are natural and admirable in woman she possessed in a high degree. Of early religious tendencies, she had great faith in the precept, "in all things charity;" for never did the breath of scandal pass her lips, and that was perhaps with her a leading virtue, while she regarded that other charity, hospitality, as one of the abstract duties of life. Crossing the Grand Prairie of Illinois in the night, your communicant was overtaken by a violent storm. The prairie being without a tree, shrub, or bush, the vivid lightning reflected from every side, while the rain and wind made a storm at sea, in comparison a mere summer shower. Baggage, papers, everything was lost, and, on arriving at Chicago, I was somehow moved to call upon Judge Douglas, of whose widely-extended hospitality I had often heard. He was not at home, but his beloved departed second-self was, and ingratitude, "more sharp than serpent's tooth," would be mind if I failed to remember with prayerful thought the incidents of that visit. May that Being to whom she attuned her spirit while on earth receive her into the companionship of the "just made perfect," and, while the disembodied immortal watches its clay below, may it shed its heavenly influence upon the friends left behind it, to direct their sorrowing steps in the path that will lead to a happy re-union.

In youth and in loveliness this gentle being has gone to the home of "many mansions," while sin and wretchedness live on. So true are the lines of Wordsworth--

"The good die first,
And they whose lives are but as summer dust
Burn to the socket."

D.H.